

**RCMP-GRC**



ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE • GENDARMERIE ROYALE DU CANADA

Commissioner

of



2007 Report



Royal Canadian Mounted Police  
Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Canada



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# Section 1

## Introduction

### Overview

As required by the *Firearms Act*, the report of the Commissioner of Firearms is submitted to Parliament annually via the Minister of Public Safety. Since 2006, when responsibility for the Canadian Firearms Program was assigned to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the designation of Commissioner of Firearms has been assigned to the RCMP Commissioner.

This report describes important events and performance measures for the calendar year 2007, the first full year the program has been under RCMP stewardship.

### Mission and role

The RCMP's overall goal is *Safe Homes and Safe Communities*. To support safe homes and safe communities, the RCMP works across boundaries with its domestic and international partners. In pursuing this goal, the RCMP focuses on its three major strategic outcomes: *quality federal policing, quality contract policing and quality policing support*—and on its five strategic priorities: *organized crime, terrorism, youth, economic integrity, and aboriginal communities*.

As an operational service line within the RCMP's National Police Services (NPS), the Canada Firearms Centre (CAFC) is responsible for overseeing the administration of the *Firearms Act* and the Canadian Firearms Program (CFP).

The Canadian Firearms Program is a multi-departmental, multi-jurisdictional program that directly supports domestic and international police services by providing firearms-registration information and by licensing individuals and businesses. This information helps distinguish between legal and illegal firearms, as well as lawful and unlawful owners and helps interdict the illegal trafficking of firearms. The CAFC works with the provinces and territories, national organizations, and many firearms- and hunter-education instructors across Canada, to promote the safe storage, display, transportation and handling of firearms.

#### The mission

The CAFC mission is to enhance public safety by promoting responsible ownership, use and storage of firearms, and by providing police and other organizations with expertise and information vital to the prevention and investigation of firearms crime both in Canada and internationally.



## History of firearms control in Canada

Prior to the implementation of the *Criminal Code* in 1892, firearms control was in the hands of Justices of the Peace. They had the authority to impose a six-month jail term on anyone carrying a handgun if the person did not have reasonable cause to fear assault against life or property. The *Criminal Code* required individuals to have a basic permit—known as a “certificate of exemption”—to carry a pistol unless the owner had cause to fear assault or injury. This first *Criminal Code* made it an offence, as well, to sell a pistol to anyone under 16 years of age. It also required vendors who sold pistols or air guns to keep a record of the purchaser’s name, the date of the sale and information that could identify the firearm.

The first official registration requirement for handguns was created in 1934. This led to the centralization of the handgun registry in 1951 and the addition of automatic firearms to the list of firearms requiring registration. In 1969, the categories of “firearm,” “restricted weapon,” and “prohibited weapon” were created, as was the requirement that each restricted weapon have a separate registration certificate. Firearms-licensing legislation (*Bill C-51*) passed in 1977 resulted in the first general screening process for prospective firearms’ owners. In 1991, many of the 1977 measures were strengthened when *Bill C-17* was introduced. These more stringent and detailed screening procedures included:

- a mandatory 28 day waiting period prior to issuance of a licence;
- increased penalties for firearm-related crimes;
- clear regulations for safe storage, handling, and transportation; and
- requiring knowledge of the safe handling of firearms.

Police, including the RCMP, have played a major role in firearms control in Canada, including management of the original handgun registration, and eventually the Restricted Weapons Registration System (RWRS). The RCMP-run RWRS listed most handguns and other types of firearms that were deemed to present a higher risk to public safety. The RWRS was eventually rolled into the Canadian Firearms Registry, where this information still resides.

In 1993, the Government of Canada indicated its intention to proceed with a universal licensing system and a universal registration system that would apply to all firearms. *Bill C-68: An Act Respecting Firearms and Other Weapons* was tabled before Parliament on February 14, 1995, and received Royal Assent on December 5, 1995. This legislation requires:

- individuals to hold a valid licence to either possess or acquire a firearm and ammunition;
- businesses to possess a valid licence if they are to engage in activities related to firearms, other weapons, devices, and/or ammunition; and
- that every firearm be registered.

A transitional period allowed for gradual implementation of the Act—individuals had until January 1, 2001, to obtain a firearm licence, and until January 1, 2003, to register them.



The Canada Firearms Centre (CAFC) was created in 1996. Since the CAFC was transferred to the RCMP in 2006, it has continued to focus on support to domestic police, law-enforcement agencies and international organizations by providing information and expertise related to firearms registration and the licensing of individuals and businesses under the *Firearms Act*.

## The CAFC and the RCMP

The CAFC operates as a service line within the RCMP's National Police Services (NPS), with the CAFC's Director General reporting directly to the Deputy Commissioner, NPS. The CAFC headquarters and the Canadian Firearms Registry are located within the RCMP headquarters in the National Capital Region.

The national call centre and the central processing site where licensing and registration applications are processed are located in Miramichi, New Brunswick.

Legal counsel is provided through the Department of Justice in Ottawa, Ontario; Edmonton, Alberta; and St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Chief Firearms Officers (CFO) operations are located within each province. Five provincial governments – Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario—are taking part in the federal firearms program and as such, are funded federally through contribution agreements. The staff in these provinces are provincial employees.

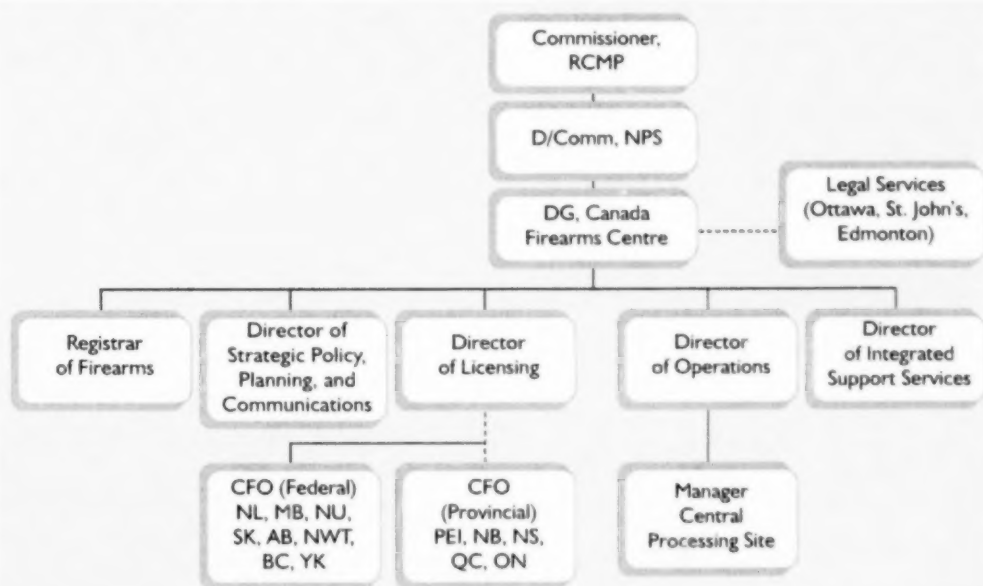
The governments of the other five provinces—Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia—have decided to opt out of the firearms program and as such, the staff in those provinces are RCMP employees. Despite the different structures, the CFO's work and operating practices are almost identical from province to province, because they are all governed by the *Firearms Act*.



RCMP HQ, Ottawa



Miramichi, NB



## Alignment of CAFC initiatives and RCMP priorities

The CAFC supports four of the RCMP's five strategic priorities through the following initiatives:

### Organized Crime

Working collaboratively with the RCMP's National Weapons Enforcement Support Team (NWEST), the CAFC assists with efforts to reduce illicit trafficking of firearms, trafficking that is largely conducted by organized crime. By providing online data on Canada's seven million registered firearms, the CAFC offers significant operational support to organized-crime investigations where firearms are involved.

### Terrorism

The CAFC is an active player in cross-border issues as they relate to firearms. For example, a CAFC representative co-chairs the firearms subcommittee of the Cross-Border Crime Forum. The CAFC also supports Canada's efforts at the United Nations and works with Interpol to combat illicit trafficking in small arms. Canada enjoys worldwide recognition for the Canadian Firearms Program.

### Youth

Although individuals younger than 18 cannot own firearms, they may obtain a licence that will allow them to borrow non-restricted firearms for purposes such as hunting and target shooting. The CAFC promotes the safe storage and handling of firearms for all gun owners and users and continues to develop initiatives focused on outreach and education with a special emphasis on youth.

### Aboriginal Communities

The CAFC engages and financially supports Aboriginal communities on firearms-related projects at national, regional and local levels. These projects are designed to improve individual and community safety by providing safety training, firearms verification and licence and registration assistance. The CAFC continues to pursue initiatives and strengthen partnerships in Canada's Aboriginal communities. It is currently leading four separate initiatives to provide firearms education and outreach programs.

# Section 2

## CAFC 2007 Operating Environment and Program Priorities

In the context of the current environment as well as Government of Canada and RCMP program priorities, the CAFC's primary strategic program outcome is to ensure "the risks to public safety from firearms in Canada and international communities are minimized." The achievement of this outcome is measured in the following ways:

- excellent client services to the firearms community;
- enhanced public safety through safe use and storage of firearms, including reduced access to firearms by those who pose a risk to public safety; and
- high-quality support to law enforcement.

There are several major trends in CAFC's operating environment:

### Society

Canada is becoming increasingly urban and the firearms population demographic is aging. Because urban residents and young Canadians are less likely to own firearms, this is causing the number of firearms licensees to decline, in the short term.

Aboriginal communities have a younger population than the Canadian average, and a comparatively large percentage of hunters. As a result, firearms play a significant role in these communities.

There are a number of legal proceedings underway between Aboriginal groups and the Government of Canada, some of which call into question the enforceability of the *Firearms Act* in the respective communities. As the Act addresses a number of public-safety and law-enforcement priorities including licensing for firearms owners, this is a concern. No decisions were rendered in 2007 that would impact the Act.

It is important to note that there is a broad consensus among the Aboriginal communities and representatives of the Canadian Firearms Program regarding the need for firearms-safety training and testing. CAFC worked with Aboriginal partners in 2007 to deliver more than 260 firearms-safety courses in six communities. Since 2001, 1,500 safety courses have been delivered and 1,700 safety-test challenges supervised in 30 Aboriginal communities. CAFC will continue this outreach and partnership activity.

### Firearms crime

There is a public perception that crime involving firearms is increasing. This has led to increasing pressure for tighter firearms control. Some crime guns are registered, and can be traced using the CAFC's Canadian Firearms Registry. At the same time, licence applicants were, and continue to be, subjected to more rigorous enhanced screening; those who present a risk to public safety for reasons of criminal background are being screened out. Finally, a number of firearms owners did not renew their firearms licences in 2007. Regardless of the reason, these individuals' firearms-registration certificates are automatically revoked when they do not renew their licence, putting them in violation of the Act until they take steps to renew their licence or dispose of their firearms.

### Science and technology

There has been a sharp increase in the number of queries by police across Canada to the Canadian Firearms Registry On-line (CFRO) through the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) interface. This reflects two things: increased confidence and support for the Canadian Firearms Programs information and growing technological literacy and capacity among law-enforcement agencies. In addition, individual and business clients of the CAFC have increased expectations with respect to availability of online services. These trends dictate that the CAFC must maintain cutting-edge technology to meet their needs.

### Policy and regulatory issues

The Firearms Marking Regulations were deferred in 2007 until December 2009 to allow time for an implementation study. These regulations will require that firearms be permanently marked with their manufacturing and, if applicable, importation status. The study will be conducted jointly by the CAFC and the Department of Public Safety.

# Section 3

## CAFC Client Service to the Firearms Community

A large number of improvements were made to firearms licensing and registration processes via incremental modifications to the Canadian Firearms Information System (CFIS). New business-intelligence software was fully implemented in 2007. Called InSitesII, this software provided CAFC staff with a much-improved method to analyze the data in CFIS and other related databases.

A CFIS address-verification initiative was also launched to reduce the number of firearms notices being returned by Canada Post as undeliverable. A large number of the non-renewed firearms licences are associated with undeliverable renewal notices. This initiative involves the use of provincial databases, the use of Canada Post address-forwarding databases and telephone follow-ups. The expected outcome of this is a reduction in the rate of undeliverable mail from 8 percent to 5 percent or less.

As part of the address-verification plan, CAFC agents telephone one or more of the references provided on the initial application for a firearms licence in an attempt to obtain a current address for the licensee. In one provincial jurisdiction, this simple strategy has led to 800 successful address corrections.

The CAFC also operates a bilingual call centre at the Central Processing Site (CPS) in Miramichi, New Brunswick, with a toll-free telephone number for clients who wish to obtain program information, ask a question, or check on the status of an application. Telephone wait times vary greatly depending on the time of day, but the 2007 overall average wait time in the call centre queue was 5½ minutes. This represented an increase from 2006, as the overall volume of licence renewals remained very high and call centre resources were diverted to priority public safety activities such as telephone reference checks, and data-quality-improvement initiatives such as address verification. It's expected as more staff are brought in to address these initiatives the average wait time will decrease.

A total of 115,000 possession-only licences (POLs) have not been renewed, even though CFIS shows firearms are still registered to the individual POL holder. 31,614 of the POL holders who have not renewed their licences were sent correspondence regarding renewal that Canada Post returned as undeliverable. The address-verification initiative will have a direct impact on licensing-compliance rates.

## Licensing

To possess and/or acquire firearms and ammunition in Canada, individuals older than 18 years of age must have a valid possession and acquisition licence (PAL). There are two other licences available to individuals within Canada:

- **Possession Only Licence (POL)** – This type of licence was introduced to recognize long-term ownership of firearms. A POL does not allow the acquisition of additional firearms but allows possession of firearms owned prior to December 1, 1998.
- **Minor's licence** – This licence is available to persons under 18 years of age who wish to borrow non-restricted firearms for specific activities such as target practice or hunting. Licensed minors cannot acquire firearms.

As of December 31, 2007, there were 1,877,880 valid individual firearm licences (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Valid licences as of December 31, 2007**

Province/Territory	POL	PAL	Minor	Total
Newfoundland and Labrador	37,403	32,913	130	70,446
Prince Edward Island	5,091	2,216	3	7,310
Nova Scotia	58,112	22,426	1,091	81,629
New Brunswick	59,663	20,867	91	80,621
Quebec	250,814	248,676	53	499,543
Ontario	272,588	245,920	4,190	522,698
Manitoba	45,026	38,379	212	83,617
Saskatchewan	51,383	43,374	123	94,880
Alberta	103,106	107,317	734	211,157
British Columbia	115,529	96,674	187	212,390
Yukon	1,918	3,753	54	5,725
Northwest Territories	1,377	3,720	32	5,129
Nunavut	176	2,556	3	2,735
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,002,186</b>	<b>868,791</b>	<b>6,903</b>	<b>1,877,880</b>

Source: CFIS

In 2007, the CAFC issued 396,216 firearms licences to individuals and 415 licences to businesses for a total of 396,631 licences (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Number of firearms licences issued and renewed in 2007**

Licence type	Total issued in 2007
Possession and acquisition licence (PAL) renewal and new	271,454
Minor's licence	3,474
Possession-only licence (POL) renewal	121,288
<b>Total issued to individuals</b>	<b>396,216</b>
<b>Total issued to businesses</b>	<b>415</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>396,631</b>

Source: CFIS

## Business licences and inspections

All businesses and organizations that produce, sell, possess, handle, display or store firearms or ammunition require a valid firearms business licence. All employees of these businesses who are required to handle firearms on the job must have a valid firearms licence. All firearms in a business inventory must be authenticated by an approved verifier and registered. Businesses must submit to periodic inspections by a firearms officer to confirm that they are storing firearms and conducting business in a safe and lawful manner. As of December 31, 2007, there were 4,981 licensed businesses under the *Firearms Act*, of which 2,576 were licensed to sell ammunition only. This number includes licenced carriers and museums.

The *Firearms Act* and regulations set out the safety standards for shooting clubs and ranges, ensuring the safety of patrons and the general public. These clubs and ranges are subject to inspections by firearms officers.

## Individual licence renewal

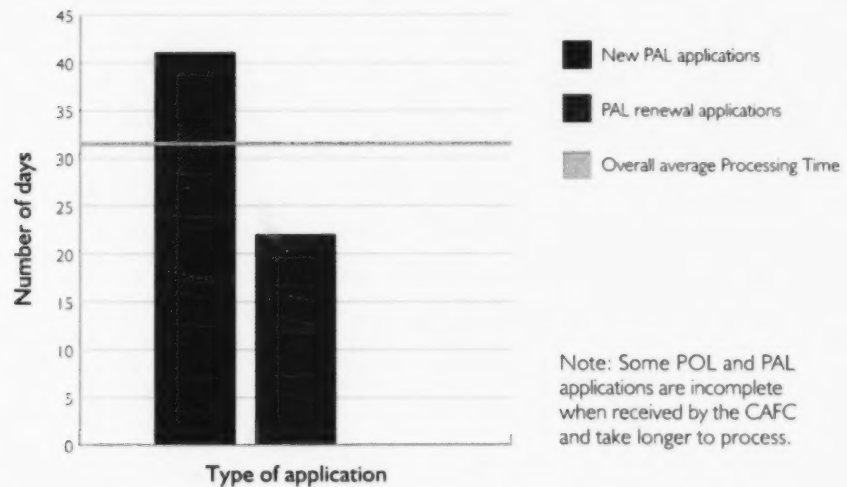
A firearms licence for an individual is valid for five years, at which point the individual must apply to renew. The CAFC has taken steps to streamline the renewal process.

The average processing time in 2007 for a licence application in which all the requested information was provided and did not require follow-up was 24 days (see Figure 3).

The average processing time for new Possession and Acquisition Licences was 41 days, due to the need for reference checks and greater scrutiny of applicants' backgrounds. This includes a mandatory 28-day waiting period for new PAL's.



**Figure 3: Time to process a licence application in 2007**



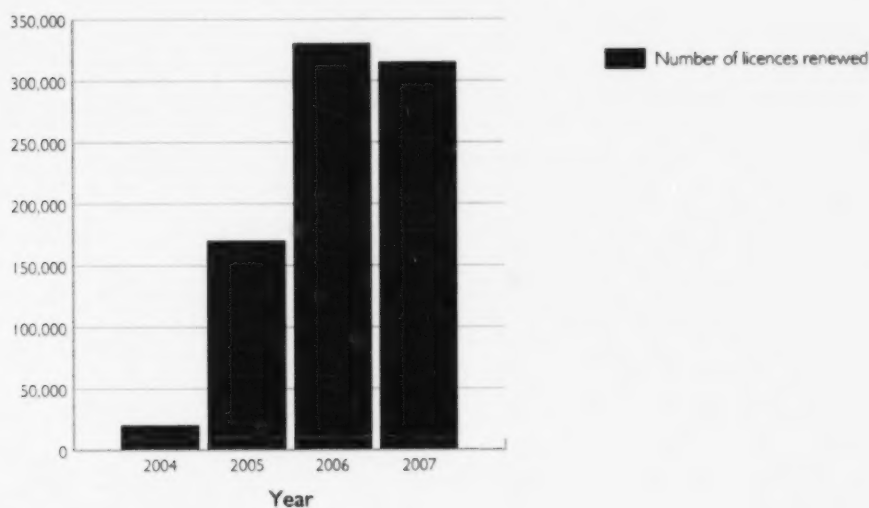
Source: CFIS

To promote compliance, a pre-populated renewal application is mailed to the client for completion 90 days prior to expiry. In 2007, a total of 388,004 licences for individuals (POL and PAL) required renewal. More than 55,800 people did not renew their licences for a variety of reasons, including no longer being in possession of firearms, death, and simple oversight (Figure 4).

Some of the non-renewals are related to licence holders not advising the CAFC regarding address changes, with approximately 8 percent of renewal notices being returned as undeliverable.



**Figure 4: Number of licences renewed by individuals 2004-2007**



Source: CFIS

## Registration

The registration of a firearm links the firearm to the licensed owner in the Canadian Firearms Information System (CFIS) database, because both data on individual firearms licencees and data on individual registered firearms is contained in this database. This feature underpins the utility of the CFIS database to law enforcement, because it enables front-line police officers to identify firearms owners in real time, cross-referenced to their addresses, through the Canadian Firearms Registry On-line (CFRO). More detail is provided on CFRO in Section 5.

Also, recording firearms information helps police and other public-safety officials carry out investigations efficiently and effectively by quickly tracing a firearm to its last lawful owner. This facilitates the recovery and return of lost or stolen firearms to their rightful owners.

In 2007, the number of registered firearms increased by 113,313. A breakdown by class of firearms is presented in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Number of firearms registered by class**

Class of firearms	Firearms registered of December 31, 2006	Firearms registered as of December 31, 2007	Increase in number of firearms registered
Non-restricted	6,450,471	6,539,906	89,435
Restricted	425,379	448,922	23,543
Prohibited	226,616	226,951	335
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,102,466</b>	<b>7,215,779</b>	<b>113,313</b>

Source: CFIS

Note: The number of prohibited firearms increased slightly in 2007 due to new registrations by businesses and museums

As of December 31, 2007, a total of 7,215,779 firearms were registered to individuals and businesses throughout Canada (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Number of firearms registered by class and province/territory as of December 31, 2007**

Province/Territory	Non-restricted firearms	Restricted firearms	Prohibited firearms	Total
Newfoundland and Labrador	179,047	3,877	1,626	184,550
Prince Edward Island	21,455	1,494	805	23,754
Nova Scotia	283,915	14,886	7,807	306,608
New Brunswick	261,289	11,047	5,710	278,046
Quebec	1,524,956	58,256	50,265	1,633,477
Ontario	1,998,450	166,301	88,924	2,253,675
Manitoba	312,905	15,481	6,646	335,032
Saskatchewan	363,276	21,920	8,866	394,062
Alberta	773,445	72,838	24,529	870,812
British Columbia	752,321	79,828	30,845	862,994
Yukon	19,730	1,394	428	21,552
Northwest Territories	17,214	1,054	349	18,617
Nunavut	9,359	163	45	9,567
Other <sup>1</sup>	22,544	383	106	23,025
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,539,906</b>	<b>448,922</b>	<b>226,951</b>	<b>7,215,779</b>

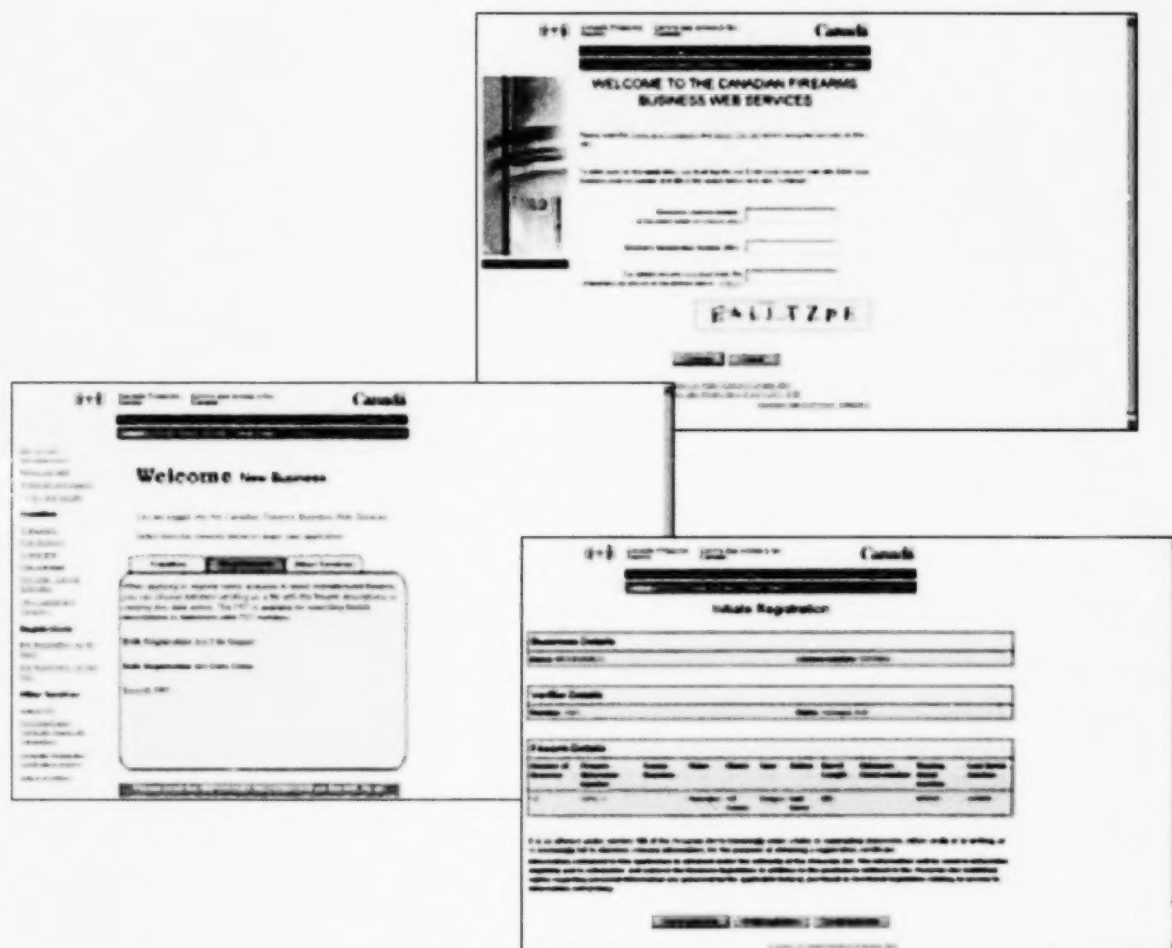
Source: CFIS

<sup>1</sup> Represents Canadians living abroad and/or non-Canadians who registered firearms in Canada.

There are several ways to register a firearm. For PAL holders purchasing a non-restricted firearm from a business that has subscribed to the CAFC's Business Web Services, online confirmation of eligibility for the transfer is immediate. After approval of the transfer in CFIS, the average processing time for a hard copy of the firearms registration certificate was four days in 2007.

For offline purchases or transfers involving businesses and individuals, the average processing time for the hard copy of the certificate was 11 days.

The average turnaround time for all firearms transfers was less than 24 hours in 2007. New firearms registration applications were processed in six days, on average. The turnaround time for registration applications requiring investigation was reduced by 54 percent from 74 days in 2006 to 34 days in 2007 through process improvements.



# Section 4

## Contributor to Public Safety

There are a number of aspects of the Canadian Firearms Program (CFP) that are specifically intended to promote safe use of firearms and public safety. These include firearms-safety training, initial and ongoing screening of licence applicants and licence holders, and inspections.

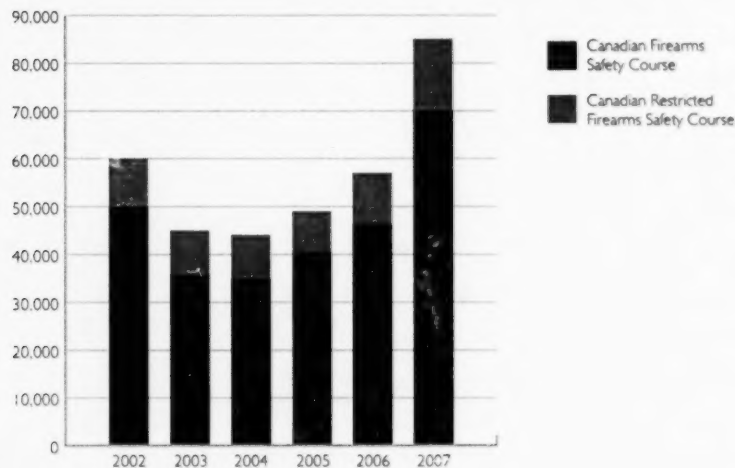
### Safety training

Firearms education is a fundamental element of the CFP that ensures a firearm user has basic firearm-safety training. To obtain a new firearm licence, among other requirements, an applicant must have passed the Canadian Firearms Safety Course (CFSC) or been certified by a Firearms Officer that they have the required competencies. The course ensures all those who possess a firearm are fully aware of their responsibility for the safe handling, transport and storage of firearms.

If the applicant wishes to possess or acquire restricted firearms, he or she must also pass the Canadian Restricted Firearms Safety Course (CRFSC) after passing the CFSC.

During 2007, 84,918 individuals took either the CFSC (70,293) or the CRFSC (14,625). Figure 7 summarizes the number of persons who completed the courses over the past six years.

**Figure 7: Number of individuals who have completed safety training**



Source: CFIS and CFO Reports

*Note: The totals in the chart above do not include the number of individuals who have taken the above courses in Quebec, except for the year 2007. This partially explains the large increase for 2007.*

## Enhanced screening for new applicants

The *Firearms Act* places the authority for licensing fully within the discretion of the Chief Firearms Officer for the province or territory in which the applicant resides.

Following the tragic event at Dawson College in Montreal in September 2006, the Minister of Public Safety sought Government of Canada approval for measures that would strengthen efforts to combat gun violence in Canada. One of those measures proposed by the CAFC, and subsequently approved by the government, is to implement enhanced screening for first-time restricted-firearms-licence applicants.

Enhanced screening is a natural extension of the current eligibility screening. The CAFC took the lead in developing a strategy for a new enhanced-screening initiative that will see first-time applicants for restricted firearms licences, and both of their references, interviewed by telephone. This will enable CFOs to identify public-safety issues that may not be indicated on an application form or reflected in an applicant's contact with police. In March 2007, the Government of Canada included incremental ongoing funding for implementation of this initiative in the federal budget.

The first wave of new staff at the CPS was hired in the fall of 2007, and started work on the enhanced screening protocol in November 2007.

### The Vital Four **ACTS** of Firearm Safety

- A**ssume every firearm is loaded
- C**ontrol the muzzle direction at all times
- T**rigger finger must be kept off the trigger and out of the trigger guard
- S**ee that the firearm is unloaded

### **PROVE** it safe

- P**oint the firearm in the safest available direction
- R**emove all ammunition
- O**bserve the chamber
- V**erify the feeding path
- E**xamine the bore each time you pick up a firearm

## Continuous-eligibility screening

All current holders of firearms licences, POL and PAL, are recorded in the Canadian Firearms Information System (CFIS). CFIS automatically checks with the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) every day to determine whether a licence holder has been the subject of an incident report in CPIC. All matches generate a report entitled Firearms – Interest Police (FIP), that is automatically forwarded to the CFO in the relevant province for follow-up. Some of these reports require no further action, but some lead to review of the individual's licence and may result in the revocation of the firearms licence. Continuous-eligibility screening reduces the likelihood that an individual who has shown they are a risk to public safety will be permitted to retain possession of firearms.

The following Figure (8) shows the number of confirmed FIP reports by province.

**Figure 8: Number of confirmed FIP reports by province**

<b>Province/Territory</b>	<b>2007</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	2,116
Prince Edward Island	278
Nova Scotia	5,588
New Brunswick	3,671
Quebec	37,302
Ontario	19,924
Manitoba	4,348
Saskatchewan	2,877
Alberta	8,766
British Columbia	11,426
Yukon	273
Northwest Territories	216
Nunavut	589
<b>Total</b>	<b>97,374</b>

Source: CFO Reports

## Licence refusals and revocations

Licensing an individual to own firearms requires a variety of background checks. Applicants are screened to detect potential risks to public safety based on the initial application. Continuous-eligibility screening is conducted through the life of the licence to identify any public-safety risks that may arise over time.

During 2007, initial application screening led to the refusal of 443 firearms licence applications and continuous-eligibility screening led to the revocation of 1,758 firearms licences. Figure 9 shows the total number of refusals and revocations since the beginning of the Program.

**Figure 9:** Number of licence refusals and revocations (by year)

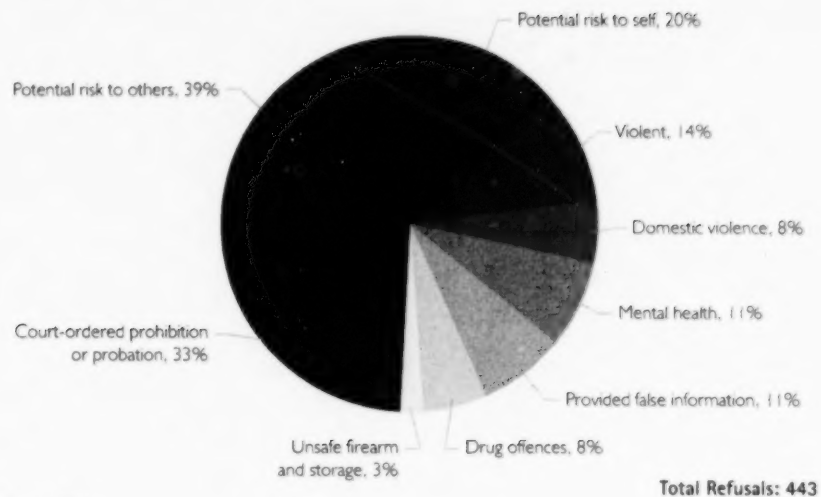
Year	Refused	Revoked
2007	443	1,758
2006	390	2,067
2005	343	2,287
2004	530	2,505
2003	1,098	2,226
2002	1,629	1,519
2001	1,883	640
2000	517	741
1999	217	452
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,050</b>	<b>14,195</b>

Source: CFIS

Chief Firearms Officers (CFO) play a vital role in the process of authorizing individuals to acquire or retain a firearms licence. The CFO has the authority under the *Firearms Act* to refuse an application for a licence or revoke an issued firearms licence, based on their assessment of the individual's risk to public safety. The reasons for the refusals are presented in Figure 10, with the most frequent reason being Potential risk to others. The reasons for the revocations are presented in Figure 11, with the most frequent reason being court-ordered prohibition or probation.

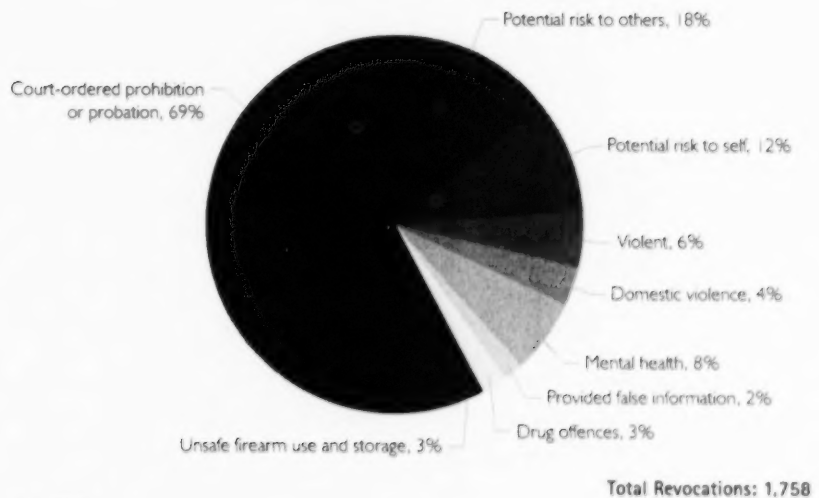


**Figure 10: Reasons For Licence Refusals**



Source: CFIS

**Figure 11: Reasons For Licence Revocations**



Source: CFIS

Note: Because a refusal or revocation can be influenced by more than one reason, the total percentage for all categories of frequency may equal more than 100 percent.



## Firearms prohibition

The *Firearms Act* requires the courts to notify the CFO of all firearms prohibition orders. Anyone applying for a firearms licence is screened and compared against prohibition and probation orders. If applicants are linked to any of these orders, they are refused a firearms licence. Individuals are then issued a notice with the particulars of the court order.

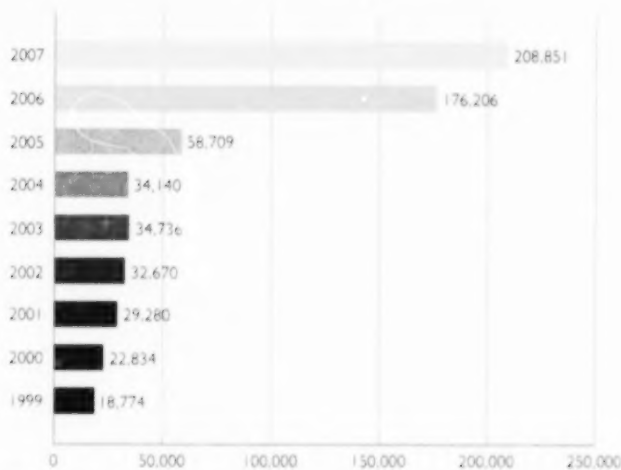
If an individual is in possession of a firearms licence, they are instructed to turn in their licence and dispose of any of their registered firearms. As well, upon notification from the courts, the CFO will administratively revoke the individual's licence.

In addition, the Registrar of Firearms will revoke registration certificates of registered firearms and provide instructions to the individual as to how to dispose of firearms. The Registrar will also refuse any application in process to register firearms.

Firearm prohibition and probation orders are captured in the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) Persons File and form part of the background and continuous eligibility checks. In 2007, 208,851 individuals were prohibited from possessing firearms.

The Canadian Firearms Program also relies on information from municipal, provincial and federal courts in determining whether an individual is a potential threat to public safety. These court orders are typically civil in nature. A match against these court orders may result in the firearms officer conducting an investigation that may lead to a revocation or a change in licence conditions.

**Figure 12: Persons prohibited from possessing a firearm**



Source: CPIC

### Canadian Firearms Program in action:

The Chief Firearms Officer (CFO) of New Brunswick revoked a firearms licence issued to a Woodstock, New Brunswick sex offender with a history of violence. Among the individual's criminal convictions were an offence of summary assault against a female victim, possession of a firearm dangerous to the public peace, offences of sexual touching two children under the age of 14 years, and a sexual assault.

The individual contested the licence revocation in Woodstock provincial court, but Judge Andrew LeMesurier agreed with the provincial CFO's decision.

The judge's written decision stated that he took into consideration the individual's history of violence and the fact that he did not disclose his criminal record when originally applying for a firearms licence in December 2000.

LeMesurier ruled that the CFO was justified in revoking the licence:

"As a result of these... incidents, including [his] non-disclosure of the convictions in 2000, the CFO considered [him] a high risk person who would engage in violent behaviour in the future, and as a result, he revoked the applicant's firearm licence."

Commencing in 2006, the CPIC system became the source of statistics for the number of persons prohibited from possessing a firearm. In previous years, the source for statistical data was CFIS.

The variance between the two source databases relates to CPIC reflecting all mandatory court-ordered prohibitions whereas CFIS only captured the number of individuals manually entered into CFIS by CFOs. The increase is also attributable to prohibition becoming mandatory for certain drug offences and convictions.

## Disposal of firearms

The Canadian Firearms Registry (CFR) also monitors the disposal of registered firearms. Disposal may be motivated by a simple desire to no longer be responsible for the firearm or it may be related to a licence revocation or refusal.

This monitoring contributes to public safety by assisting the CAFC in understanding the movement of firearms. Information on the disposal of firearms can be crucial during crime investigations. As of the end of 2007, individuals and businesses reported the disposal of 198,281 firearms.

Figure 13: Disposal of firearms

Status	Non-restricted	Restricted	Prohibited	Total
Deactivated	216	185	77	478
Destroyed	2,380	309	229	2,918
Exported				
Business	189,827	1,633	2,908	194,368
Individual	329	117	71	517
<b>Total</b>	<b>192,752</b>	<b>2,244</b>	<b>3,285</b>	<b>198,281</b>

Source: CFIS

## Inspections

Chief Firearms Officers are responsible for inspecting and approving the licences of shooting clubs and ranges within their provincial jurisdictions to ensure they are operating safely and that they comply with the *Firearms Act*. In addition, they may inspect firearms businesses or individuals in possession of a large number of firearms or prohibited firearms, to ensure storage and handling is not posing an unacceptable risk to the safety of the community.

# Section 5

## High-Quality Support to Law Enforcement

### Public and stakeholder outreach and the CAFC strategic engagement initiative

Activities in outreach support were focused on increasing compliance to the Act and awareness of the CAFC's role in supporting law-enforcement agencies. These activities included engaging provincial and territorial ministers responsible for public safety, provincial associations of chiefs of police and other regional partners and providing them with information about the program. In 2007, the CAFC met with high-level representatives from all provincial and territorial governments to discuss the firearms program, its importance to public safety and the provincial/territorial role in promoting firearms safety in their jurisdictions.

The outreach program also supported opt-in and opt-out Chief Firearms Officers (CFO) so they could make various presentations and attend shows in the regions. The CFOs greatly multiply CAFC's ability to communicate to clients through face-to-face contact in their regions.

The CAFC also exhibited at the annual meeting of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police in Calgary, providing communications materials at the meeting and throughout the year to police agencies. This material was designed to assist front-line police in understanding firearms laws, how to use the Canadian Firearms Information System (CFIS) via the Canadian Firearms Registry On-line (CFRO) and how to better promote firearms safety in their communities.

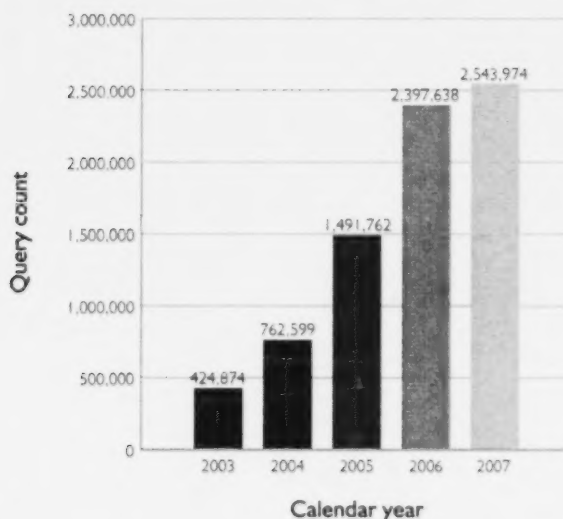
Looking forward, a strategic communications plan will be launched in 2008. This plan will target the law-enforcement and firearms communities with the key messages being safe use of firearms, compliance with the Act, and how the program supports police.

## Police and justice-system support

The Canadian Firearms Registry On-line (CFRO) is a subset of the Canadian Firearms Information System. The system is available to Canadian police agencies via the CPIC system to assist them when responding to calls and conducting investigations. As a searchable application, police officers may query firearm-related information such as the serial number or registration certificate number of a firearm or the name, address and firearms licence number of an individual.

CFRO is key to the safety of both police officers and the public, providing police with immediate access to the information they require in their investigations and operations. Ongoing support is provided to law-enforcement agencies on a case-by-case basis. Figure 14 shows how the use of the CFRO tool continues to increase.

**Figure 14: Queries to Canadian Firearms Registry On-line**



Source: CFIS

Note: Data for prior years has been adjusted to account for upload of data errors between CFIS and CFRO systems.

## CFRO survey

In early 2007, the Canada Firearms Centre (CAFC) undertook an initiative to assess the usefulness of CFRO to general duty police officers. The purpose was to gain an understanding of how CFRO could be improved to offer greater assistance to the policing community as well as to identify the need for additional training. With the assistance of the RCMP Survey Centre, the CAFC conducted a survey targeting this audience.

The survey was sent to 500 police contacts from a wide variety of agencies, encouraging distribution to as many general duty officers as possible. The CAFC received responses between March and July 2007. During this period, 408 police officers from 56 police departments completed the survey with a functional breakdown as follows: 262 general duty patrol officers; 64 criminal investigators; and 82 supervisors. The responses fully reflect large, small, urban, rural, federal, municipal and provincial police services.

The survey consisted of questions focusing on the use of CFRO and the users' familiarity and training with the system.



**Figure 15:** Key findings of CFRO survey (Percentage of positive responses)

	Participating Police CFRO-trained	Participating Police Not CFRO-trained	Participating Police Overall
Does your agency use the CFRO system?	98%	86%	92%
Do you use CFRO in your day-to-day functions?	78%	53%	65%
I use CFRO in responding to calls for service.	81%	65%	73%
CFRO query results influence the manner in which I handle calls for service.	73%	65%	69%
In my experience, CFRO query results have proven beneficial during major operations.	81%	68%	74%

Source: RCMP Survey Centre

The results of the survey confirm that trained general duty police officers value the information from CFRO and it has a significant impact on their day-to-day functions especially on service calls that could involve violence or firearms.

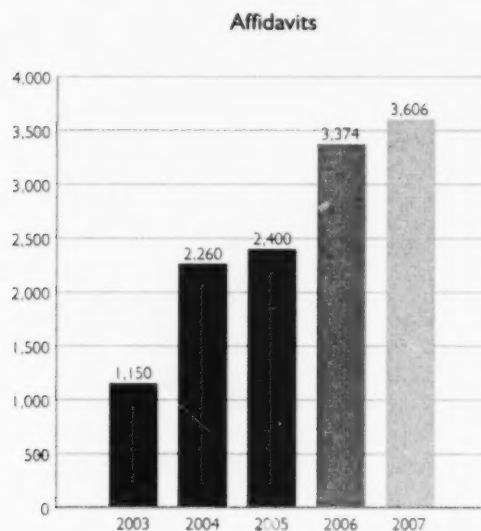
The CAFC will develop a formal training program for CFRO, including assessment of options and content for training, beginning early in the 2008–2009 fiscal year.

## Affidavit requests

The Canada Firearms Centre assists the policing community and Crown prosecutors by preparing affidavits that certify licensing or registration information related to individuals or firearms. Typically, affidavit requests are required to determine which firearms an individual has registered to them or to determine if a given firearm is registered. This certification is based on data maintained and controlled by both the Chief Firearms Officers and the Registrar.

As shown in Figure 16, the number of affidavits produced for legal proceedings has continued to increase for the past five years.

**Figure 16: Number of affidavits produced**



Source: CAFC

The Centre also operates a toll-free 1-800 Police Support telephone help line that assists the law enforcement community with firearms- and licence-related questions. In addition, the Centre also provides statistical and legislative information to law enforcement agencies across the country on both legal and illegal firearms.

## Border controls

One of the main policy objectives of Canada's firearms legislation is to combat the illicit trafficking and smuggling of firearms. Greater legislative controls over the importation and exportation of firearms are included in the *Firearms Act*. Separate offences for smuggling and trafficking are included in the *Criminal Code*. The CAFC has supported a number of international initiatives dealing with import, export and transit controls of firearms consistent with Canada's legislative objectives.

The CAFC works closely with the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) to ensure compliance with the *Firearms Act*. The CBSA is committed to a responsible enforcement program while maintaining the quality of its border services. Non-residents are allowed to import firearms by using a firearms declaration that is valid for up to 60 days. These are confirmed by customs officers at border crossings. In addition, the CBSA seizes undeclared firearms at border crossings. Figure 17 identifies, by type, the number of firearms seized in 2007.

**Figure 17:** Firearms seized by CBSA in 2007 (by class)

Non-restricted	148
Restricted	180
Prohibited	334
<b>Total firearms seized at the border</b>	<b>662</b>

Source: CBSA



## International initiatives

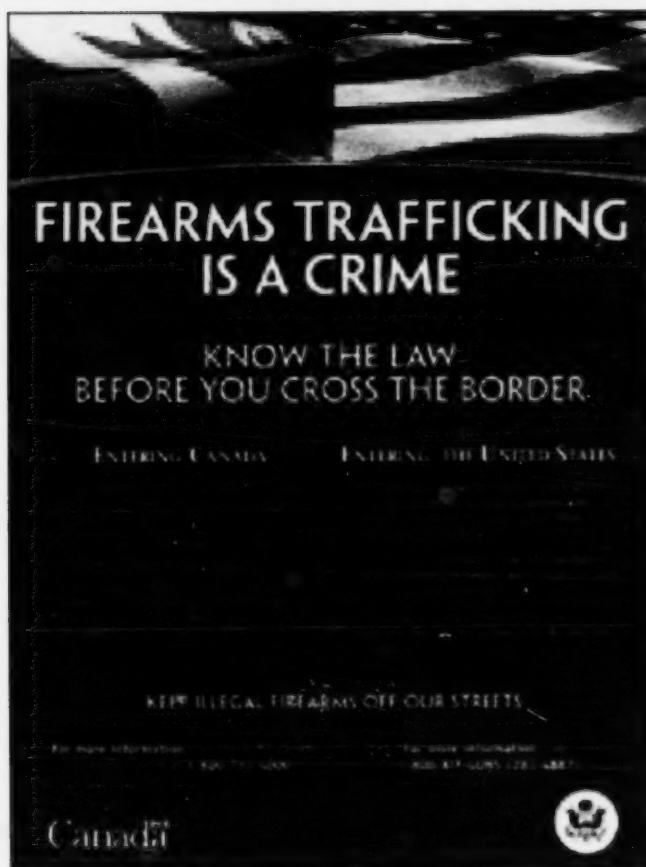
During 2007, the CAFC continued to work with the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATFE) as a member of the Canada-US Firearms Trafficking Consultative Group. The Director General of the CAFC co-chaired the Cross Border Crime Forum Sub-Group on Firearms held in North Carolina where both countries reaffirmed commitments dealing with firearms-related issues.

Joint cooperation has led to the development of initiatives to combat firearms trafficking, such as the publication of the first *Firearms Trafficking Overview* as a public document and a joint awareness campaign poster related to firearms at border crossings. The overview restates the ongoing commitment to fighting the illegal movement of firearms and provides a snapshot of general trends and shared public-safety concerns. Under the joint awareness campaign, a firearms information poster was developed for display at land-, sea- and air-border crossings within Canada, with the cooperation of CBSA. This poster will also appear at US crossings.



The US Attorney General and the Minister of Public Safety Canada signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) enabling the ATFE and the RCMP to access each other's forensic firearms data. This agreement will enable the electronic sharing of forensic ballistic information and enhance joint efforts in fighting firearms crime. The establishment of an electronic interface between the Canadian Integrated Ballistic Identification Network (CIBIN) and the US National Integrated Ballistic Identification Network (NIBIN), which began in 2005, was completed.

In November 2007, the ATFE and some neighboring US police organizations met with Canadian law enforcement agencies in Vancouver, BC, to share international firearms intelligence. The purpose of this conference was to improve officer knowledge about policies and procedures, tracing assistance and procedures that will assist in the solving of cases.





# Section 6

## Summary

The Canadian Firearms Program made considerable progress with respect to a number of strategic priorities in 2007, including more integration with the RCMP's National Police Services, focusing on support to law enforcement and public safety, and improving service to clients. The overarching consideration is the promotion of safe homes and safe communities.

Key trends in the RCMP and CAFC environment included growing use of technology by clients and the expectation that the Canada Firearms Centre would use technology to improve service. This was reflected in better turnaround times for licences and registrations. Growth in secure-network queries by police to the Canadian Firearms Registry On-line (CFRO) during 2007 was impressive and reflects a major improvement in the level of knowledge of and confidence in the program.

Another trend of significance to the CAFC was the public attention and concern about firearms crime and the perceived threat to public safety posed by privately owned firearms. Major investments were made in enhanced screening and other measures intended to both increase the rate of firearms-licensing compliance and deny licences to those who may be a threat to public safety.

To improve police awareness regarding their role in enforcing revocations and prohibitions and other *Criminal Code* provisions of the *Firearms Act*, the CAFC launched a strategic-engagement initiative involving outreach to regional officials charged with law-enforcement responsibilities. Automatic continuous-eligibility screening of licencees was also key to public safety. Benefits were gained by linking police incident reports to the firearms licencee database and flagging licencees who appear to present a higher risk to public safety.

The Chief Firearms Officers continued to play a key role with respect to the licencee client base, and program support to CFOs has a direct payback in terms of client service and public safety. Linkages between CFOs and regional law enforcement were also strengthened with support from the program.



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Outreach to Aboriginal communities in 2007 focused on firearms-safety training, as a means to reduce the firearms-related risk to public safety in these communities and encourage compliance with licensing and registration regulations. CAFC education and training initiatives were well received and will be a key component of the CAFC's strategy in Aboriginal communities going forward.

Other initiatives are focused on continuously improving business activities, something that ultimately supports all strategic priorities. One of these relates to the quality of data within the Canadian Firearms Information System (CFIS), including postal-address quality, technical characteristics of firearms and the elimination of duplicate firearms records. New CFIS business-intelligence software (InSitesII) was used to automate and streamline production of notices to clients, court affidavits and other official documents. InSitesII also greatly improved the quality of management information regarding program operations and will be used in the future to support performance reporting.

Overall, the Canadian Firearms Program was strengthened and woven more closely into the RCMP's National Police Services during 2007. It provided better service to law enforcement organizations, better service to licensing and registration clients, and was an important contributor to the RCMP's overall goal of "safe homes, safe communities." The RCMP is confident that 2008 will see continued progress in the priority areas.